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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 1348
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RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE 0696
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RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFISS/CDR USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PESHAWAR 000536

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: NWFP: BELEAGURED SWAT

CLASSIFIED BY: Michael A. Via, Acting Principal Officer,
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REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)
Summary

¶1. (C) One year after the military entered Swat and nearly six months after the collapse of a peace deal with Mullah Fazlullah, security conditions in the district appear to be worsening with increasing indications that the advantage lies with the militants. Violence is steadily creeping into Mingora, one of Swat's principal towns located near the district capital Saidu Sharif. Targeted killings of local officials and political figures have become a common occurrence. Beheadings appear to be a favored means of execution to intimidate the population. There are also early signs that neighboring districts Buner and Dir may be facing trouble from insurgents. Overshadowed by operations in Bajaur and complicated by the politics of the settled areas, Swat's deepening security woes are illustrative of Pakistan's challenge in the northwest frontier -- too many trouble spots and too few forces. End Summary.

Resurgent Fazullah

¶2. (C) Multiple local officials have expressed concern to Principal Officer that the insurgency in Swat is re-gathering its strength. Led by Mullah Fazlullah who has declared allegiance to Tehrik-i Taliban's Baitullah Mehsud, militants have maintained a steady stream of attacks not just in their strongholds of Matta, Charbagh, Kabal, and Khwazakhela tehsils (approximately 25-40 km north of Saidu Sharif), but increasingly are hitting targets in Swat's more urban areas.

¶3. (C) Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) Chief Minister Haider Hoti and other Awami National Party (ANP) politicians complain that the military halted the campaign against the insurgents prematurely in February, allowing Mullah Fazlullah to escape into the Peochar valley and surrounding mountains (northwest of Saidu Sharif). (Note: ANP captured six of the seven Provincial Assembly seats in Swat district in the February elections.) 11th Corps Commander General Masood and other military officers criticize the provincial government for striking a deal with Fazullah in May.

¶4. (C) Over the summer, the NWFP's peace agreement with Fazullah

broke down, but as the violence began to pick up in the district, operations in Bajaur became the increasing focus of the military and Frontier Corps in August. While the 17th Division (headquartered in neighboring Dir district) has a presence in Swat, it is also responsible for back up support to Bajaur. Chief Minister Hoti and other officials characterize the bulk of the army's operations as artillery strikes which carry force but are also inaccurate, resulting frequently in collateral damage.

15. (C) The police, on paper, are Swat's primary patrol force, but Hoti acknowledged to the PO that police are deserting in Swat in large numbers. (Note: Hoti and NWFP Governor Ghani have been pressing President Zardari for federal assistance to improve the quality of training and benefits of the NWFP police. The NWFP police salary/benefits package appear to be about half of what their counterparts in Punjab receive.) Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who visited Swat recently told the Embassy's Border Coordinator that the police and civilian administration were virtually nowhere to be found in Saidu Sharif, and in Mingora.

Mingora -- "Not Safe"

16. (C) One local official with multiple tours of duty in the NWFP's northern districts recently declared flatly to PO, "Mingora is not safe." (Note: Mingora is a few kilometers northwest of Saidu Sharif on the opposite side of the Swat River.) Militants, he said, were steadily creeping into Mingora. Violence in the Mingora area alone since late November includes:

-- November 22: Several satellite dish and electronic shops were burned down or damaged near a police station.

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-- November 24: A female employee of a local NGO was murdered and mutilated in her home after reportedly criticizing local taliban at a press conference.

-- November 30: A VBIED suicide attack killed ten and injured 50 near a security post at the entrance of the city.

-- November 30: A CD shop was burned.

-- December 2: An army convoy was ambushed, resulting in the death of one soldier.

-- December 8: The bodies of three barbers were found beheaded.

-- December 11: A school housing Frontier Corps personnel near the airport was attacked with rocket fire. No casualties reported.

-- December 12: The residence of ANP Member of the National Assembly Muzaffawal Mulk Khan was attacked. The MNA was not injured, but it is unknown if there were other casualties.

Targeted Killings

17. (C) Targeted killings have become a staple of life in Swat, particularly in TTP's strongholds:

-- August 25: Militants attacked the home of the brother of Waqar Ahmed Khan, an ANP Member of Provincial Assembly, in Kabal tehsil, killing the brother, two nephews, and seven others. TTP claimed responsibility for the attack.

-- October 2: ANP's District Vice President for Swat was killed in the district (details NFI).

-- October 24: A police officer was found beheaded in Charbagh tehsil.

-- October 27: TTP beheaded the member of a Matta tehsil lashkar as a "warning" to others who might oppose them.

-- November 22: The brother of ANP's provincial Minister for Environment Wajid ali Khan was gunned down in Mingora. The minister's brother was a police officer.

-- November 25: A city council member in Matta tehsil was gunned down.

-- November 26: A senior police officer assigned to neighboring Buner district was gunned down while visiting his family in Mingora. The officer was a native of Matta tehsil.

-- December 4: A senior ANP leader for Upper Dir who had assisted in setting up a lashkar in his area was gunned down while visiting Mingora. TTP claimed responsibility and warned that those engaged in similar activities would be "punished."

-- December 6: The secretary to an ANP Member of the Provincial Assembly was found with his throat slit in Khwazakhela tehsil.

Trouble in Neighboring Districts?

18. (C) Buner and Dir districts which border Swat to the south and west have largely been quiet. Local contacts comment that both districts have a history of strong, tightly knit community leadership. When the military entered Swat a year ago, a number of communities in both districts told fleeing local taliban to stay clear of their areas. In recent weeks, however, there has been a smattering of reports of threats and attacks in these districts that appear to be linked to militant activity.

-- December 3: Local taliban picked up a woman for "immoral" activities in Dir and warned others to refrain from vulgarity and obscenity.

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-- December 11: TTP in Darra Adam Khel claimed responsibility for an Eid suicide attack near a mosque in Buner's district capital Daggar which killed one and injured four. TTP said the attack was in retaliation for the deaths of TTP associates in Buner in August. The TTP associates had killed several Buner police officers, angering locals who reportedly surrounded the house of the militants, executed them, and exhibited the bodies.

-- December 12: Local taliban in an area of Lower Dir had banned people's movements in local bazaars and on the roads during prayer times and asked mosques to observe uniform prayer timings. Community leaders reportedly told local taliban to cease out of concern that the pronouncements would be the catalyst for a military operation.

Comment

19. (C) There is a fair amount of bitterness and finger-pointing in the NWFP over the continuing deterioration of security in Swat. ANP leaders insist that the May deal was necessary under Pashtun culture because the party who refuses to talk is deemed to be at fault. Despite strong words in private from ANP provincial leadership of the need to "wipe out" Mullah Fazlullah and key members of his circle, that tough talk has not translated into a unified, coherent, public ANP voice on how to deal with Swat's re-surging militants. The police, confronted with a hardened, well-armed adversary are demoralized and unable to cope. Stretched thin by other demands, particularly continuing operations in Bajaur/Mohmand, the Pakistani military and other security forces are not in a position to respond consistently to this growing hot spot, illustrating the continuing challenge that Pakistan faces on its northwestern border.

VIA